

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks at a Campaign Rally and a Question-and-Answer Session in Cincinnati, Ohio

July 16, 2012

The President. Hello, Cincinnati! Well, it is good to be back! Everybody, please have a seat if you've got a seat. *[Laughter]* I think most people have a seat here. It is great to see all of you.

I want to acknowledge—first of all, I want to make sure that I acknowledge your outstanding mayor; Mark Mallory is in the house! Where is he? He was around here somewhere. There he is right there. Good to see you.

Now, I know that some of you think that I came to this music hall to sing. *[Laughter]* But I have to tell you, there's no concert tonight—*[laughter]*—or at least not this afternoon. There may be a concert tonight. Michelle has told me I should not be singing in public all the time. *[Laughter]*

Audience member. It's my birthday!

The President. Well, it's—happy birthday. Should we—what's your name?

Audience member. Adam.

The President. Adam? How old are you, Adam?

Audience member. I'm 18 today.

The President. All right. Let's sing "Happy Birthday" to Adam then. We can sing.

[At this point, the President led the audience in singing "Happy Birthday."]

The President. Hey! All right. So there was a concert after all.

Audience member. I'm 101 years old!

The President. There you go. Let's give a round of applause—what's your name, sir?

Audience member. Dr. H.L. Harvey.

The President. Okay. *[Laughter]* Dr. Harvey, happy—it's not your birthday, but just congratulations on being 101. Dr. Harvey looks good. I've got to follow him around and see what he eats. *[Laughter]* Because I'm going to eat what he eats.

And—okay, you guys—105 right here! 105? *[Laughter]* What's that sweet lady's name?

Audience member. Margaret Harris.

The President. Margaret Harris is 105 years old. God bless her.

Audience member. Hundred-and-six next month.

The President. Hundred-and-six next month. She's beautiful.

Well, it's so nice to—I guess folks do pretty good down here in Cincinnati. *[Laughter]* You've got 105, 101—

Audience member. I'm 93.

The President. Ninety-three, okay. *[Laughter]* God bless you. We love you too. *[Laughter]* Anybody else over 100? *[Laughter]* You're not over 100. All right. No more birthdays; that's it. *[Laughter]*

Now, today——

Audience member. Are you going to sing?

The President. No, I'm not going to sing. *[Laughter]* No Al Green.

Today we are turning this beautiful music hall into a town hall. So I'm not going to take too much time up front. I want to spend as much time as possible answering some of your questions and getting your comments. But I do want to just say a few things about what's at stake here.

Four years ago, we came together—Democrats, but also Independents and Republicans, who were interested in restoring the basic bargain that made America the greatest nation on Earth. We've got so much to be thankful for: incredible land and an incredible military. Our men and women in uniform, they do so much for us all the time. And there's obviously great wealth in this Nation. But what really sets us apart has always been that we've got the greatest middle class and a basic idea that's at the heart of this country that says if you work hard, then you can get ahead. If you're responsible, then you can live out your dreams, you're not confined to the circumstances of your birth.

A basic belief that if you're doing what you need to do—because we're not a country that believes in handouts, we believe in working for what we get—that you're able to find a job that supports a family, get a home that you can call your own; that you're able to send your kids to get a good education and, hopefully, allow them to go to college and they can achieve and succeed in ways you might not have even imagined; that you won't go bankrupt when you get sick; that you'll be able to retire with dignity and respect. That's the idea that built this country. That's the idea that turned us into a economic powerhouse.

And what we saw for about a decade before I took office was the sense that that dream was slipping away from too many people, because people were working harder, but they were getting less. Incomes and wages were flatlining, while the cost of everything from college to health care to groceries to gas were all going up.

So our goal was to turn this around, and we knew it wouldn't be easy. We knew that it might take more than one term, maybe more than one President. But we knew that we had to get started to reclaim this dream.

And then, what we discovered was that because of irresponsibility, because of economic policies that had failed and a lack of oversight when it came to regulations, we inherited the worst financial crisis and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And millions of people were hurt: lost their jobs, lost their homes, lost their savings. And a lot of folks are still struggling.

But here's the thing. Americans are always tougher than tough times. And this crisis has not changed our character. It hasn't changed what we believe in. It hasn't changed that basic notion that everybody should get a fair shot and everybody should do their fair share and everybody should play by the same set of rules.

And so even though over the last 3½ years, our central focus has been how do we recover from this crisis and get people back to work and make sure that small businesses are doing well

again and that they're getting financing—despite all those things—our goal has not just been to get back to where we were before the crisis struck, but rather to build an economy that lasts, to build an economy that says no matter what you look like, no matter where you come from, no matter what your last name is, you can make it if you try here in America.

Everything I've done since I've been President has been focused on this central issue. That's the reason I'm running for a second term as President of the United States.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. And you know what, part of the reason I'm here today—

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Part of the reason that I'm here today is I want to remind everybody that the challenges we face are solvable. The problem is not a lack of big ideas. It's not a lack of technical solutions to our policy issues. The problem is we've got a stalemate right now in Washington—

Audience members. Yes!

The President.—between two fundamentally different ideas about how we move the country forward.

This election is about more than just two candidates or two political parties, it's about two different visions about how do we build a strong economy. And the good news is you're the tiebreaker. The choice is up to you. *[Applause]* The choice is up to you.

Governor Romney and his allies in Congress, they believe in an economic theory that says: if folks at the very top are doing really well, then that spreads to everybody else. It's what we call top-down economics.

So right now their main prescription for growing the economy faster is an additional \$5 trillion in tax cuts, most of which would go to the wealthiest Americans, even if to pay for it you'd have to gut education programs or turn Medicare into a voucher program or eliminate our investments in basic research and science. That's their vision about how you grow an economy.

They've actually got a two-part vision. One is tax cuts for the wealthy. And then, the second is eliminate regulations that we've put in place to make sure, for example, that Wall Street doesn't engage in the same reckless behavior that got us into this mess in the first place.

Now, I've got to tell you, it would be one thing if they had this theory and we hadn't tried it before. But the truth is we tried it for almost a decade, and it didn't work. The track record of their vision resulted in turning surpluses into deficits. We ran two wars on a credit card. Job growth was the most sluggish it'd been in decades. The average wages and income of working families actually went down during this period, and it culminated in this massive crisis.

So I don't know about you, but in my life, what I found, sometimes I do boneheaded things, I make mistakes. What I find is when I don't—when I try something and it doesn't work, then I don't try it again. Right? You don't go back to doing something that didn't work.

Now, I've got a different idea. So for example, Governor Romney said he would extend the tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans indefinitely.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. He says that until he puts a tax plan in place. But his tax plan is not just to keep all the Bush tax cuts. As I said, he wants to put another \$5 trillion—this is estimated that it's almost impossible for you to bring down the deficit and deal with the debt with that kind of tax plan. Nearly 40 percent of these new taxes would go to the top 1 percent of all households.

We have not found any serious economic study that says Governor Romney's economic plan would actually create jobs—until today. I've got to be honest. Today we found out there's a new study out by nonpartisan economists that says Governor Romney's economic plan would, in fact, create 800,000 jobs. There's only one problem: The jobs wouldn't be in America. [Laughter] They would not be in America. They'd be in other countries. By eliminating taxes on corporations' foreign income, Governor Romney's plan would actually encourage companies to shift more of their operations to foreign tax havens, creating 800,000 jobs in those other countries.

Now, this shouldn't be a surprise, because Governor Romney's experience has been investing in what were called "pioneers" of the business of outsourcing. Now he wants to give more tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas.

So I want everybody to understand, Ohio, I've got a different theory. We don't need a President who plans to ship more jobs overseas or wants to give more tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas. I want to give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in Ohio, that are investing in Cincinnati, that are investing in Hamilton County. I want to give incentives to companies that are investing in you, the American people, to create American jobs, making American goods that we're selling around the world, stamped with three proud words: Made in America. That's why I'm running for President of the United States.

Now, the difference extends not just to the difference in corporate taxes, it's also individual taxes. We don't need a President who is going to give himself a big tax break. [Laughter] We need a President who is going to cut your taxes.

Now, 4 years ago, I promised to cut taxes for the middle class, and I kept that promise.

Audience members. Yes, you did!

The President. The typical family's tax burden is \$3,600 lower than it was when I came into office. I want all the press to notice that. Because sometimes, you'll hear all these crazy accusations: "Oh, Obama, is raising taxes, burdening"—no, here are the facts. Typical middle class family, your taxes have gone down \$3,600 since I've been in office.

A couple weeks ago, I called on Congress to immediately extend these tax cuts to 98 percent of the American people. Folks making \$250,000 a year or less would not see their taxes go up one single dime—their income taxes go up one single dime. Now, I should point out, by the way, that 97 percent of small businesses also would not see their taxes go up, because typically, they don't earn more than \$250,000.

Now, if you're fortunate enough to be the other 2 percent—and I am—I didn't—Michelle and I didn't use to be, now we are. We've been blessed. That's great. What we're saying is for those folks, we can afford to pay a little bit more in taxes by going back to the rates that were paid under Bill Clinton. That will help us reduce our deficit by about a trillion dollars. And everybody says the deficit and the debt are important, and I agree.

And I just want to point out, the last time we did that, when Bill Clinton was President, we had surpluses, not deficits, created 23 million new jobs, and by the way, we created a lot of

millionaires and billionaires to boot. Because when an economy is growing from the middle out and from the bottom up, everybody does well, including people at the very top. That's how you grow an economy.

When teachers and firefighters and police officers and construction workers—when folks who are putting in a hard day's work—when they do well, then everybody does well. That's how America has always succeeded. We believe in individual initiative and self-reliance. But there's some things we do together, and growing an economy is one of them.

My grandfather, he went to college on the GI bill. That generation helped to expand the middle class, and everybody did better. When we invested in the Hoover Dam or the Golden Gate Bridge or the Internet, sending a man to the Moon, all those things benefited everybody. And so that's the vision that I want to carry forward.

That's why when the auto industry was on the brink of collapse and Governor Romney said "let's let Detroit go bankrupt," I said no. One out of eight jobs in Ohio depend on the auto industry; a million jobs across the Midwest are at stake. I'm going to bet on American workers and American ingenuity. And now GM is back on top, and Chrysler and Ford are on the move. And the American auto industry has come roaring back.

So let me just close by saying this, and then, we can get to some questions. My vision says we're going to invest in education and we're going to hire new teachers, especially in math and science, open up 2 million more slots for folks to go to community colleges to get trained in the jobs that businesses are hiring for right now. We already helped to make sure that students—student loan rates didn't double, but now we've got to work more to lower tuition costs so young people aren't burdened with debt.

So we're going to invest in education. We're going to invest in American energy. Yes, we want to continue to expand our production of oil and natural gas, but I also want to make sure that we are the leaders in solar and wind and biodiesel, the energy of the future that can help reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

American manufacturing, change our Tax Code, provide incentives for companies to invest here, invest in basic research and science so that we are at the cutting edge, because whoever has got the best technology will ultimately have the best economy. We've got to make those investments.

Rebuilding our infrastructure—I know you've got some bridges around here that need repair. You've got some roads that need a repair. Let's put construction workers back to work.

I ended the war in Iraq as I promised. We're winding down the war in Afghanistan. We've decimated Al Qaida. Let's now take half the money we were spending on war and do some nation-building right here at home.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. And finally, let's reduce our deficit, reduce our debt. Let's do it in a responsible way that allows us to continue to make these investments we need to grow and make sure that everybody is doing a little bit to help not just themselves, but help the country.

So that's my vision. And it contrasts with the other side, and you are going to be the tiebreaker. This is going to be your choice. That's how our democracy works. And some of you noticed, there's going to be a lot of paid advertising and a lot of money; we're seeing folks write \$10 million checks——

Audience members. That's not us!

The President.—to try to get me out of office. So it's not you, I know. [*Laughter*]

But even though my hair is a little grayer—[*laughter*]—even though I'm a little older, let me tell you, I still have as much confidence as I ever had in the American people. Because one of the great privileges of being President is you get a chance to travel all across the country. You meet people from every walk of life. And wherever I go, what I'm always struck by is the core decency and goodness and hard work and responsibility and faith that the American people have.

So I'll always bet on the American people. And I'm confident that if we work hard, we get our message out, we have an honest debate about what needs to happen in this country and what future is best for our children and our grandchildren, then we're going to finish what we started in 2008. And we'll remind the world why the United States is the greatest nation on Earth.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

All right. Okay. So everybody take a seat so I can see who wants to ask a question. And there are no—there are only a couple of rules here. Rule number one is you've got to raise your hand if you have a question. I'm going to call girl-boy, girl-boy—[*laughter*]—just to make sure that it's fair. If you have a chance, stand up and introduce yourself. And there are folks in the audience with microphones, so wait until we've got a microphone so everybody can hear your question.

And my only other request, because I want to try to get in as many questions as I can—at least six or seven—so if people can keep their questions short, I'll try to keep my answers short. [*Laughter*] But, now, if you ask me how do you bring about world peace, that's a big question. [*Laughter*] So try to keep the question to one that we can be succinct about, all right?

And I'm going to start with this young lady right here in the, sort of, the pink, white blouse. Yes, right there. All right, and wait till the microphone comes up. Introduce yourself.

Q. Can you stand with me?

The President. Oh, is that the birthday boy?

Q. Yes.

The President. Okay, I didn't—he's getting a lot of attention today. [*Laughter*] All right, go ahead.

Civil Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Persons

Q. Okay. My name is Anna, and my son is openly gay. And he is grassroots, and he speaks for a lot of the LGBT community. And we'd like to know, since you are for the LGBT, what's your next steps? What are you going to do for us?

The President. Well, look, let me say this. First of all, I think what the American people have seen and made such progress on is recognizing the idea of equal rights, equal dignity, equal respect for everybody. That applies to everybody. That is a bedrock principle of America.

And that's—when I came into office, everything from making sure that same-sex couples could have visitation in hospitals just like everybody else; making sure that we ended "don't ask, don't tell" because fighting for the country you love should not depend on who you love; being

clear that DOMA is something that we should repeal—across the board I've tried to constantly align myself with what is best in our tradition, and that is, you treat everybody fairly.

Americans are about fairness. And that doesn't mean that folks have to agree with everybody on everything. We don't. But we want to treat everybody fairly.

Now, I think it's important to recognize, though, that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters are still subject to discrimination. That's why we passed hate crime legislation, and we've still got to fight for that. I think it is important for us to respect decisions that States make with respect to expanding treatment of same-sex couples and marriage. But also what I want to say is that gay and lesbian families are like everybody else; what they're really also worried about right now is making sure they can pay the bills.

So my strong belief is that it is important for us to focus on individual issues of fairness, but also recognize that we all have common interests as well. Your son is 18; I'm assuming he's going to get some more education, and I'm assuming you guys are worrying right now about making sure he doesn't come out with a whole bunch of debt, and how——

Q. Miami.

The President. Miami?

Q. Miami.

The President. Miami of Ohio?

Q. Yes.

The President. Outstanding. Congratulations. We've got some folks from the alma mater here.

So we want to treat everybody fairly, and we also want to make sure that the economy treats everybody fairly. And I'm going to be fighting for that as long as I'm President of the United States.

All right. This gentleman right here. Does anybody have a mike over there? Okay, right behind—very good. I'm impressed. There you go.

Oil and Gas Production/Environmental Protection

Q. Mr. President, I'm Jim O'Reilly. Ten years as an elected city official has shown me a real change in what the Republican Party has been doing to us. They've taken away our power to protect our natural resources—water and air—from the strength of the oil and gas drillers that are doing fracking here in Ohio. I support what Lisa Jackson and the EPA are doing. Is there more the administration can do to protect us from the adverse effects of drilling for natural gas? Thank you.

The President. Good. Well, this is a great question, and it's an important question. A couple of things I just want everybody to know. First of all, if you hear anybody say that somehow we are impeding the development of our energy resources here in this Nation, I want you to know these facts: oil production, higher than it's been in 8 years; natural gas production, higher than it's been probably in our lifetimes; oil imports, actually lower than they've been in 16 years. In fact, our oil imports are less than 50 percent now for the first time in a very long time. And so we're moving in the right direction in terms of energy independence.

Now, part of that is this boom in natural gas. And this is something we should welcome, because not only are we blessed with incredible natural gas resources that are now accessible because of new technologies, but natural gas actually burns cleaner than some other fossil fuels and is an ideal fuel—energy source that we potentially can use for the next 100 years. So I want to encourage natural gas production. The key is to make sure that we do it safely and in a way that is environmentally sound.

Now, you always hear these arguments that somehow there's this huge contradiction between the environment and economic development or the environment and energy production. And the fact of the matter is that there are a lot of folks right now that are engaging in hydraulic fracking who are doing it safely. The problem is, is that we haven't established clear guidelines for how to do it safely and informed the public so that neighbors know what's going on, and your family, you can make sure that any industry that's operating in your area, that they're being responsible.

So what we've said is, look, we are going to work with industry to establish best practices. We are going to invest in the basic research and science required to make sure this is done safely and in a way that protects the public health. And for responsible companies, they should be able to operate, make a profit, and we can all benefit and put people back to work. But if you're an irresponsible company that's not doing the right thing, we're going to hold you to account. And that's how we should develop this incredible resource, which, by the way, if we do it properly, could end up changing the economics and politics globally of energy in a way that's actually very good for us, because we'll be less dependent on what happens in the Middle East and our economy will be less subject to the kinds of spikes that we saw earlier in the spring in terms of gas prices.

Thank you for the question.

All right, it's a woman's turn. That young lady in the white T-shirt right there. Hold on, hold on, wait for the mike.

Q. My name is Delicia White, and I and my husband, we're small-business owners. And he actually has a question that he needs to answer. *[Laughter]*

The President. Well, wait. No, no, you can't do that now. *[Laughter]* I called on the young lady, and that's what's called a bait and switch. *[Laughter]* That is what's called a bait and switch. No, the rule is that I'm going to make sure that women get equal time with men. *[Applause]* Ah, see that?

Q. Well, we would like——

The President. Oh, no, no, no. *[Laughter]*

Q. Okay, his questions was, he is a small-business owner, and he wanted to know what can you do for the self-employed—for self-employed businesses with less than 10 employees working with him.

The President. Okay, here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to let him go ahead and ask his question. *[Laughter]* And then, I'm going to call on two women in a row. Because this is—we got cheated here. *[Laughter]*

Go ahead. Next time, you stand up. Don't send your wife out first. *[Laughter]*

Small Business Promotion Efforts

Q. Okay, I'm Tony White, and hello, Mr. President.

The President. Good to see you, Tony. What kind of business do you have?

Q. A barbershop and beauty salon.

The President. There you go.

Q. I've been in business for over 10 years now.

The President. That's great.

Q. And what I'm trying to find out is, what will you be doing, or if there's anything you'll be doing, for the self-employed and businesses under— with employees—with less than 10 employees.

The President. Absolutely.

Q. And also, when can I cut your hair? [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, first of all, let me answer the second question first. You know that you would not want a President who is disloyal to his barber. [*Laughter*] Right? I mean, a man and his barber, that's a strong connection. [*Laughter*]

Q. I know, I know.

The President. So I am not going to let you cut my hair because my barber would be hurt. [*Laughter*]

Q. Just one time, just one time. [*Laughter*]

The President. Maybe I'll let you give me a line, a little bit.

Q. Yes, yes, we can do that. [*Laughter*]

The President. All right, in terms of small business, look, small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy. They account for most of the new job growth. We've got obviously great big businesses. In this area, Proctor Gamble is an example of an outstanding large business. But a lot of the job growth happens with small businesses, who then become medium-sized businesses and then maybe at some point become large businesses.

So ever since I came into office, one of my biggest priorities was how do we support small businesses, which is why we've actually provided 18 different tax breaks just targeted at small business since I've been in office. It's the reason why we have pushed the Small Business Administration, especially when the recession had just hit, to extend additional financing and to waive fees for small business, because one of the biggest challenges for small businesses is getting credit lines.

Q. Yes, it is.

The President. And we've actually been pushing the banks to say, look, taxpayers pulled your backside out of the fire; it's now important for you to step up and make sure that small businesses aren't finding their credit restricted, especially if they've been in business for a while.

The other thing we've done is to say, what are the critical needs of small business? A lot of times, one of the biggest challenges is to make sure that you, as a sole proprietor, that you can get health insurance for you and your family. So when you hear about the Affordable Care Act—Obamacare—and I don't mind the name because I really do care. That's why we passed

it. You should know that you, once we have fully implemented, you're going to be able to buy insurance through a pool so that you can get the same good rates as a group that, if you're an employee at a big company, you can get right now, which means your premiums will go down.

We will also give you additional tax credits if you are providing health insurance for your employees; we'll give you tax credits for that. Right now one of the things we're pushing Congress to do is to give you a tax credit if you hire additional workers or you give folks who are a working for you a raise. We want to give you incentive to do that.

But this is an example of where there's a contrast between myself and my opponent. As I said before, his basic tax plan is to give folks at the top a tax break. Now, we can have that debate, but what I've said is, in the meantime, let's give 98 percent of individuals and 97 percent of small businesses some certainty right now by going ahead and passing a law that says your taxes won't go up. Because if Congress doesn't act, by the way, by January 1, everybody's taxes here are going to go up, by an average of about \$1,600—if Congress doesn't do anything. And so what I've said is if you really want to help small business right now, give 97 percent of them the certainty that their costs will not go up. And then, we can have a debate about the other 2, 3 percent.

Now, one last point I'm going to make on this small business and taxes argument: You'll hear Republicans say, you know what, if you tax, let's say, somebody with a million dollars of income, you're going to be crushing the small-business jobs creators. Now, first of all, I've just explained 97 percent of small businesses make less than 250 a year. But setting aside that, the way they describe small businesses, half of the Fortune 400 richest Americans in the country would qualify as a "small business." Hedge fund managers would qualify as small business, even if they were pulling in a billion dollars a year. And my—this is an example of what I mean when I say we just want everybody to be treated fairly.

Audience members. Right!

The President. Michelle and I were talking the other day, and Michelle's dad worked as a blue-collar worker. He was at the water filtration plant in Chicago, worked there all his life—all his adult life. And he had MS, so by the time I met him, he could barely walk. But he never missed a day of work. He had to use two canes. He had to wake up an hour earlier than everybody else just to get dressed. But he never missed a day of work. And he took pride in being at the job, even if he didn't feel well. And he used to tease folks who were lazy; he'd say, these people are so lazy they won't even go to work to pick up their paycheck. *[Laughter]* They want it mailed to them.

And Michelle's mom, she stayed at home when the kids were young, and then, she went to work as a secretary. And she worked as a secretary most of her adult life.

So the point is, they didn't have a lot. But Michelle and I were talking about how they didn't envy people who had a lot more. There was no sense that somehow our lives are less because we're not millionaires, we're not making huge amounts of money. God bless folks who are doing successful—who are successful and doing well. The only thing that Michelle's parents, my mom, my grandparents, the only thing they didn't like is when you felt like folks at the top were taking advantage of their position and not following the same rules as everybody else and keeping other folks down.

And we don't want an economy in which some are being treated differently than others. That's all. And that's especially true when it comes for our small-business folks. I want them to have some of the same advantages, because you probably can't afford the same number of

lawyers and accountants and all that stuff that are working all these loopholes. And I want to make sure that you're getting the same good deal as everybody else.

All right? Okay.

I'm going to call on this young lady right here. She seems like she has an urgent question. Hold on, wait for your mike. Wait for your microphone. We're getting the next generation involved in this. Right here, right there. Yes.

Girl Scouts of America/Girl Scout Cookies

Q. What's your favorite Girl Scout cookie?

The President. Oh, oh. I've got to say this is one of the toughest questions. [Laughter]
What's your name?

Q. Julie.

The President. And you're a member of a Girl Scout troop? Are you?

Q. Yes.

The President. How long have you been a Girl Scout?

Q. I think for only—I think only this year.

The President. This year? Have you—

Q. Two years.

The President. Two years. Have you been having fun?

Q. Yes.

The President. Yes? You know, I've got to say that I'm pretty partial to those mint—

Audience members. Thin Mints. Yes! Thin Mints.[Applause]

Audience member. Boo!

The President. I'm just saying—that's just me. I didn't mean to create controversy here. There was someone—[laughter]—did you hear there was somebody booing. What do you—how do you—what's was your choice? Who was booing up there? [Laughter] You had a different opinion. What are you, oatmeal or—

Audience members. Peanut butter.

The President. Okay. Peanut butter is quite good too, but I'm going with the mint. I'm going with the mint.

All right? Thank you for the question. Thank you.

All right. Remember I said I was going to go two ladies right now. So here, right here. Right here. Here we go. Go ahead. Whoops, don't fall, now. Go ahead.

Q. My name is Susan. Welcome to Cincinnati.

The President. Thank you.

2012 Presidential and Congressional Elections

Q. Given how divided the country is, if elected, how do you plan to try to unite everyone?

The President. Well, I'll be honest, sometimes people ask me what's my disappointment since I've come into office. And obviously, we're always trying to grow the economy faster, put people back to work faster. But one of the disappointments I've had is that we have not changed the tone in Washington the way I wanted to.

Now, part of this just has to do with the fact that the other side had a basic economic—or a basic political theory after I got elected—and this is not my opinion. I mean, this has been said by the leader of the Senate minority in Washington. And the basic theory was, you know what, we kind of screwed things up; Obama is really popular right now; if we cooperate with him, then he'll get credit, so we're better off just saying no. And if we do that, then over time, folks will forget the mess he inherited and we can go after him, and hopefully, that will help our politics. Again, this is not my theory. This is explicitly their strategy.

What's true is also we've got, as I said, two different visions about how to move the country forward. But my hope is that this election allows us to, once and for all, resolve some of the bigger questions about how we move the country forward, because right now we've got as stark a choice as you could imagine. I believe in investing in education and transportation and science and research and bringing down our deficits in a balanced way, and changing our Tax Code to make sure that companies that are investing here are doing better.

Mr. Romney has the opposite view on almost all those positions. On things like "don't ask, don't tell", Mr. Romney wants to reverse my position. On issues like immigration, I believe in comprehensive immigration reform; he does not. On issues related to women, I believe that Planned Parenthood does a lot of good, and that women's health—women should be able to control their own health care decisions. He does not.

On Iraq, he said me ending the war was "tragic." I said I think it was the right thing to do. On Afghanistan, I imposed a deadline, a timetable for when we're going to bring our troops home. He wants to extend their stay indefinitely. So on all these issues, we've got just profound differences.

Now, you guys ultimately are the arbiters of this disagreement. And in this election, if the American people decide you know what, we want to try what Mr. Romney is offering——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, I mean, that's the great thing about democracy, is people can vote and make up their minds. And so if that's the case, then you can count on Mr. Romney implementing the plan that he and the Republicans in Congress have put forward. So \$5 trillion in tax cuts, massive cuts in a lot of the programs that are so important, from my perspective, to growing the economy, those will be eliminated. Medicare will be voucherized. They will implement what they say they're going to implement.

But if I'm elected, not only do I think that we'll be able to continue the progress that we've made over the last 3½ years, I actually think that a lot of Republicans, since this will be my last election, they will not be as interested in just beating me and maybe they'll be more interested in moving the country forward. That's my hope.

And I have to say, the truth is on most of these issues, there shouldn't be so much partisan rancor, because most of the positions I've taken are positions that used to be supported by Republicans.

And if you want just one good example: health care. The bill I passed is in all respects similar to what Mr. Romney passed in Massachusetts. It's working really well there. He should

be proud of it instead of running away from it. And the original idea of using the private sector to make sure that everybody had health care, that originated as a Republican idea. And I said, fine, I'm willing to work with your ideas to make progress.

So I actually think that there are a number of Republican members of Congress who right now feel as if they've got to toe the party line. But if the objective is no longer just beating me, my hope is that they'll be more open to finding commonsense solutions to the problems that our country faces. And I know that is absolutely a goal of mine, because in the end, we are not Democrats or Republicans first, we are Americans first. That's what I believe.

All right. I've got time for two more questions. This gentleman in the blue shirt right there. All right, I'll end over here. Come on. *[Laughter]* Go ahead.

Education

Q. Mr. President, my name is Jeff Whitesell, and I have been teaching for 21 years.

The President. Congratulations.

Q. Thank you. I teach at a vocational school, career tech school. And my question to you is, we've been talking about jobs, we've been talking about kids, we're talking about—I know you want every kid to go to college, but not every kid is going to go to college. We need people to work. We need people to be plumbers and build bridges and those kind of things. And what I want to—*[applause]*—I believe it, I really do.

We do miracles at our school. We take kids who have had really rough lives and we make them productive. But the problem is, is that they are not getting enough chances to get to go to work right away. We have advisory boards, but these advisory boards are free, and they're—these people are not getting paid. What we need—and I was hoping that you could tell us if this is something in your agenda—can we have people come in, give tax breaks to these companies to come and help schools to teach the schools what they really need for these kids? And that's what I—that's what we're looking for.

The President. Well, first of all, thank you for teaching. Most important job there is. We appreciate that. Second of all, I want to be very clear. When I say everybody needs a higher education, I don't mean everybody has got to take a 4-year college education. The point is that, these days, if you want to be a plumber, if you want to be an electrician, you want to be working in a factory, you are generally going to need a little bit more training than high school provides, which is why our community college system is so important.

But you are absolutely right that one of the, I believe, mistakes we made 20, 30 years ago was to start deemphasizing vocational education, because not everybody wants to sit in a classroom with a book. A lot of folks want to do stuff. And right now we've got shortages of folks in fields that need technical training, but don't necessarily require a 4-year college degree.

And so part of what I'm talking to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan about is how do we work with high schools so that young people who've got an aptitude—whether it's in graphic design or in electronics, or you name it—that they can start getting on a pathway so that they are being trained for the jobs that actually exist now, they're being matched up with companies that are hiring now. They maybe start apprenticing junior, senior year in high school; maybe it extends to another year or two in community college. And by the time they're 21, 22, 23, they are expert in fields where we know there is hiring taking place right now.

So it's very important. We're going to be working with States, local governments, school districts, and community colleges to try to figure out how we can expand what is already a proven idea in a lot of places around the country.

And so, you and I, we're right there. We're thinking the same way. And I'm looking forward to seeing if we can make progress on this.

All right, last question. I promised—no, I'm going to call on this young lady right here. All right? This is the last question, and we got to get a mike to her. But it's nice to see you, young man. [Laughter] That's a good-looking young man, isn't he? He's a handsome young guy. [Laughter] All right, go ahead.

Unemployment Rate/Job Creation

Q. Hi. My father, he's an unemployed construction worker, and he's on unemployment. So as your job as President, will he have a job before his unemployment runs out?

The President. Well, no, this is an important question. What's your name?

Q. Taylor.

The President. Taylor. How old are you, Taylor?

Q. I will be 15 in 2 months.

The President. Well, so nice to meet you, and I'm glad you're thinking about your dad, because I know he wants to work.

Audience member. That's my granddaughter.

The President. My hope is, is that we can put him to work.

Housing took the biggest hit in our economy because you had this big housing bubble that collapsed, so the construction industry, the industry where your dad works, was the hardest hit of any industry. And it's the one that's been the slowest to come back, which is why, since September of last year, I have urged Congress to expand our efforts to rebuild roads, bridges, schools, laying broadband lines going into rural communities, making sure that all these folks, like your father, who want to work—these aren't folks who are looking for a handout, they want to be on the job—so that they have an opportunity to do work that we're going to have to do anyway.

And this is important. How many folks here have a house and you know that you've got a leaky roof? Do you—you can put off patching up that leaky roof, but sooner or later, you're going to have to patch it up. Sooner or later. And if you don't, what happens?

Audience member. Falls in.

The President. It falls in. And then what happens? It's more expensive. Same is true if you got a busted boiler. So we all have what's called deferred maintenance. We can't always do it right away, but a lot of times, if we have an opportunity to do it, we should go ahead and do it, especially if it's cheap.

It is cheaper now to do it than it will be later. Interest rates are low. Construction workers are out of work. Contractors are begging for work. They'll come in on time, under budget. And so we could knock out a whole bunch of work that needs to get done for this country anyway and put people back to work, which would grow the economy right now.

Now, so far, I have not gotten a positive response from Members of Congress on the other side of the aisle. They did just pass—and this was a sign of some modest cooperation, so it makes me feel a little bit encouraged—they did just pass a transportation bill that at least wouldn't lay off more construction workers.

But the first thing I want to do was put your dad back on the job rebuilding America. Now, if your father still doesn't get a job, though, part of what I'm also looking for is making sure that unemployment insurance is there for folks who want to work, but are having trouble finding work.

And I want folks to be clear: Unemployment insurance, unemployment benefits, they're paid for. Your employer paid for them. Directly and indirectly, you paid for them. The idea is to have that safety net because everybody once in a while can have some bad luck.

Now, we tried to extend unemployment insurance beyond normal right after the recession hit. We were able to extend it again in 2010. It's been harder now to get Congress to extend it further. And I don't know exactly what category your father falls in, but my bottom line is, my general view is that as long as the economy is weak and somebody is willing and able to work, and looking for work actively—which is what's required if you want to get unemployment insurance—then we should be there for them to make sure that they can pay the rent and look after their families.

And so we'll continue to negotiate with Congress to make sure that unemployment is there. But the most important thing I want to do is make sure your dad can get a job. All right?

Let me just say, everybody, I am going to be back in Cincinnati. I'm going to be back in Ohio. I want to thank you for your attention. And I want to explicitly ask you for your support.

This is going to be a close election. This is going to be a close election, and it is going to be an important debate. And I want everybody to understand that what I've tried to do over the last 3½ years is to keep my promises. So I promised I'd end the war in Iraq; I ended it. I promised that we would keep taxes low for middle class families; I did that.

But the most important promise I made—some of you remember me saying this in 2008—I said, you know I'm not a perfect man. I said, I wasn't going to be a perfect President; no President is. But what I promised you was that I would always tell you what I thought, I'd always tell you what I believed, and I would wake up every single day fighting as hard as I knew how for you. And you know what, I have kept that promise.

Because when I look around this room, if I see an elderly couple I think about my grandparents and everything they did for me. And when I see this young lady asking about her dad, I think about my daughters. I see myself in you. And my most important job is fighting for you and that basic American idea that if you work hard in this country, you can succeed, you can get ahead.

And I'm going to do everything I can, as long as I have the honor of being President, to fight for you and working families and middle class families all across this country. So I hope you'll stand with me. I hope you'll work with me. Let's finish what we started and remind the world why the United States is the great nation that it is.

God bless you and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. at Cincinnati Music Hall. In his remarks, he referred to musician Al Green; Republican Presidential candidate former Gov. W. Mitt Romney of

Massachusetts; and Sen. A. Mitchell McConnell. He also referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson and brother-in-law Craig M. Robinson.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Campaign rallies :: Cincinnati, OH.

Locations: Cincinnati, OH.

Names: Clinton, William J.; Duncan, Arne; Green, Al; Harris, Margaret; Harvey, H.L.; Hoover, Adam; Mallory, Mark; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Robinson, Craig M.; Robinson, Marian; Romney, W. Mitt; White, Delicia; White, Tony; Whitesell, Jeff.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Banks and financial institutions :: Loans to small businesses, increase; Business and industry : Construction industry :: Decline; Business and industry : Construction industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Economic impact; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Hiring incentives; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Promotion efforts; Civil rights : Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Communications : Broadband technology; Congress : Bipartisanship; Economy, national : Economic concerns; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Global competitiveness; Education : Postsecondary education :: Affordability; Education : Postsecondary education :: Career training and continuing education; Education : Teachers; Education : Vocational and technical education programs; Education, Department of : Secretary; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment insurance; Energy : Domestic sources; Energy : Oil and gas industry :: Safety and environmental issues; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Small businesses, tax credits to purchase insurance coverage; Housing : Housing market :: Decline; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Middle East : Oil supply and refining; Ohio " Democratic Party events; Ohio : President's visits; Small Business Administration : Loan guarantee facility; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax cuts, budgetary effects; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Transportation, Department of : Funding.

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